

2023/2024 J-LEAP REPORT

By Honoka Maegawa



*The Woodlands College Park High School
The Woodlands, TX*

Konnichiwa from Texas! My name is Honoka Maegawa. I'm currently working as an Assistant Japanese Teacher at The Woodlands College Park High School. I started my career as a cabin crew after graduating from university and this experience made me more interested in Japanese language and culture. Therefore, I decided to obtain my teacher certification and applied to J-LEAP after I finished the certification program. This is my first-year teaching Japanese and I've been learning and experiencing a lot of new things every day since I came to Texas. Today I would like to talk about the town, my school, and my life here in The Woodlands.

The Woodlands, Texas

Have you ever heard "The Woodlands" before?

I didn't know about the town until I was told my dispatch assignment. The Woodlands is located 28 miles away north of downtown Houston. You can visit downtown Houston by car, and I go there sometimes on the weekends. The Woodlands is a newer city which was founded in 1974. Next year is its 50-year anniversary, so the town will have a ceremony which I'm looking forward to seeing. As follows the name of the city, the town is surrounded by many trees, very peaceful, and the people are really kind. There is a big mall here, and you can get whatever you want. Also, The Woodlands has many lakes and walking paths, so you can enjoy walking outdoors. I personally like to go to The Waterway and North Shore Park because the scenery and atmosphere are perfect.



The Woodlands College Park High School and Japanese language program

I'm working at The Woodlands College Park High School (TWCP) which was established in 2005. It is a newer school, but we have about 3,200 students from 9th grade through 12th



grade. The campus is enormous, and I still need a map when I go to other classrooms. Our school's motto is "Commitment, Pride, Honor, Success!", and this year's theme is "Believe". That is why you can see many Believe slogans throughout the school. Our school colors are navy, silver, white, and green, and our mascot is a Cavalier. I belong to the LOTE (Languages Other Than English) department. Hojo-sensei, the French teacher, the Chinese teacher, and I often share our lunch and it is one of my favorite things to do because we can try something new and share each other's cultures. Teachers and students in TWCP are really kind and the atmosphere makes me feel comfortable to be here.

There are five foreign languages, Spanish, French, German, Chinese, and Japanese, offered at TWCP. All students are required to take 2 years of foreign language in order to graduate. Currently, 89 students are taking Japanese and my lead teacher, Hojo-sensei and I teach 4 levels (Japanese 1/2/3/AP) each day for 46 minutes over six classes. I'm glad to see students every day and enjoy teaching and talking with them in Japanese.

Students have various reasons to take Japanese class. Some students have an interest in Japanese culture such as manga and anime, and some of them would like to visit, work, or live in Japan in the future. Also, some students told me that they decided to take Japanese because no one in their family speaks it, so it is more special and unique. I always feel thankful to students who decided to take Japanese even though it is a challenging language for them.



Hojo-sensei and I basically teach classes following a textbook, but we put authentic materials and provide them real-life situations to learn authentic Japanese as much as possible. Also, we have culture days in order to introduce and allow students to experience Japanese culture. This semester, we did an origami activity and taught students how to use chopsticks. Furthermore, we have a pen-pal program and students can interact with Japanese students from Wakayama. I think having a real connection with Japanese students motivates them to study Japanese. Hojo-sensei and I often show demonstrations in classes, and we believe that our conversations and gestures help the students feel and see Japanese culture more.



My lead teacher Elizabeth Hojo-sensei

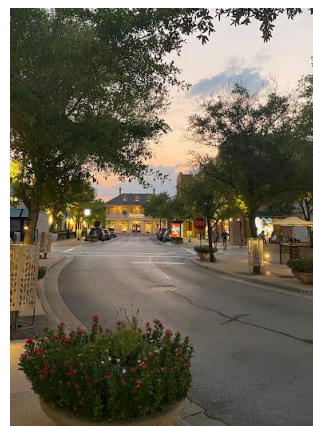
I would like to talk about my amazing lead teacher Elizabeth Hojo-sensei. Hojo-sensei has been teaching Japanese at TWCP for 12 years. She has a warm generous heart, and her cheerfulness makes me, and our students smile every day.

Hojo-sensei is passionate about creating fun lessons for her classes, so students enjoy studying Japanese. She often includes many activities in the class, and it engages students' learning. Furthermore, Hojo-sensei treasures her students and looks after them really well. I think her kindness makes students confident to study Japanese, and I always admire her attitude towards students. We usually talk about our lesson plans after school. This is why we can co-teach smoothly. Also, Hojo-sensei has an open mind and always tries to draw out my opinions and listen to them. Therefore, we can share our ideas a lot and are able to try new things. I learn not only how to teach Japanese but also how to manage classes from Hojo-sensei.

Hojo-sensei and I often spend weekends together and I think that spending this time apart from school time makes us closer. We usually go to Houston to get some Japanese groceries and to eat delicious Asian food. Also, we did a road trip after finishing the arrival training in Seattle, and it is one of the best experiences I've ever had!

My daily life

I've been living with host family and enjoy spending time with them. They really like events such as Halloween and Christmas, so it is fun to see how they decorate the house. We usually take turns cooking dinner, so my host family usually makes American or Mexican foods and I make Japanese food. We always enjoy exchanging our foods and it allows us to know each other's culture more.



Also, I cannot thank my host family enough because without their help I couldn't set up my life in the U.S. It was challenging to move to Texas because it was my first time visiting here and everything was new to me. However, my host family always gives me a helping hand and treats me as a member of their family. Therefore, I was able to adjust to my new life here well.

Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to people who always support me and encourage me. I am spending a fulfilling time in the U.S. because of them. Also, I am really grateful to have this valuable opportunity where I am learning not only effective approaches to support Japanese language learners but also those interested in American and Japanese culture during these 2 years. I would like to tell students how interesting it is to exchange culture and learn Japanese. I really hope I can leave a good impression on my students and impact them to achieve their goals. I will continue to do my best during these 2 years as a member of J-LEAP.